

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MOGADI 00341 221143Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05
SP-02 SS-15 IO-13 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 ACDA-12
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FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5862
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY BERN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO 459
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEPOASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY SANA
USINT HAVANA
USMISSION USUN
USMISSION USNATO
DIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOGADISCIO 0341

BERN FOR INDIAN OCEAN DELEGATION

LONDON FOR MOOSE

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: MOPS, ET, SO
SUBJ: OBSERVER SEES LOCAL SOMALI SUCCESSES AS LONG TERM DANGER

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REF: MOGADISCIO 0265

1. IN THE COURSE OF ONE OF OUR PERIODIC REVIEWS OF THE MILITARY
SITUATION, EGYPTIAN MILITARY ATTACHE COL. AHMED MOHMOUD ABDEL-
HALIM TOLD THE AMBASSADOR AND DCM ON FEB 22 THAT THE SOMALIS
FORCES ENJOYED SOME SUCCESSES IN SEVERAL LOCAL COUNTER ATTACKS
WHICH THEY LAUNCHED ON FEB 19. ACCORDING TO HALIM, THE

SOMALI FORCES ACHIEVED SOME MINOR GAINS WITHOUT MEETING ANY DETERMINED RESISTANCE. THE SOMALIS THEN FOLLOWED UP THESE GAINS WITH THE RESULT THAT THE FRONT IS NO LONGER CONTIGUOUS, BUT A HODGE PODGE OF STRONG POINTS WITH EACH SIDE HAVING UNITS IN A POSITION TO OUTFLANK OR CUT OFF OPPOSITION FORCES. HALIM DID NOT GIVE UNIT STRENGTHS, BUT ACCORDING TO HIS INFORMATION THE SOMALIS NOW HOLD BABILE, BORAI, AND COMBULCIA WITH THE ETHIOPIANS IN GOREI AND IN CONSIDERABLE FORCE ON THE RAILWAY TO DJIBOUTI.

2. HALIM BELIEVES THE SOMALIS MADE A SERIOUS TACTICAL MISTAKE IN REOCCUPYING THESE ADVANCED POSITIONS. HE DOES NOT THINK THEY HAVE THE MEANS TO HOLD THEM IN THE FACT OF DETERMINED ATTACKS, AND SUSPECTS SOMALIS UNITS MAY BE ELIMINATED PIECEMEAL. HE ALSO THINKS THE ETHIOPIANS GUIDED BY THEIR SOVIET ADVISORS HAVE BEEN VERY CLEVER IN ARRANGING WHAT HE TERMS A TRAP FOR THE SOMALI FORCES. HALIM SUSPECTS NO BASIC DEPARTURE IN THE ETHIOPIAN SOVIET PLAN OF ATTACK WHICH IS TO SWEEP AROUND THE SOMALI RIGHT, AND BOTTLE UP THE SOMALI MAIN FORCE IN JIJIGA. HE DOES NOT BELIEVE THE SOMALI HIGH COMMAND HAS AN APPRECIATION OF THE DANGERS OF THE PRESENT EXPOSED POSITION. HALIM SEES THE ETHIOPIAN OFFENSIVE POSSIBLE WITHIN THE NEXT WEEKS.

3. COMMENT: ONCE AGAIN HALIM PRESENTS A PLAUSIBLE PICTURE OF THE BATTLEFRONT WHICH IS IN GENERAL HARMONY WITH WSLF
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REPORTS AND THE IMPRESSIONS OF JOURNALISTS RETURNING FROM THE SOMALI LINES. THE LULL IN THE FIGHTING AND THE TEMPORARY SUCCESSES THE SOMALIS HAVE GAINED MAY LEAD SOME TO FALSE IMPRESSIONS. WE SUSPECT THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS CONSCIOUS OF THIS, AND DOES NOT WANT TO DEFLATE EITHER CIVIL OR MILITARY MORALE. THIS DOES NOT CHANGE OUR ASSESSMENT, HOWEVER, THAT THE GSDR KNOWS THE MILITARY INITIATIVE HAS PASSED TO THE ETHIOPIANS, AND THAT SOME KIND OF ACCOMMODATION IS REQUIRED, EVEN IF THE URGENCY OF THE MOMENT HAS PASSED.
LOUGHRAN

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